

Virtual visit of the Primate Gallery of the Museum of Natural History and Territory (University of Pisa): accessibility and usability for blind users.

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Usability guidelines are available to design web site visits accessible to the blind users. However, the actual usability of accessible web pages changes depending on the type of information the user is dealing with. Museum web sites including specimen/exhibition hall descriptions need specific requirements to allow vision-impaired users, who navigates using a screen-reader (a device that reads the text of the page), to access pieces of information based on a visual perception.

Here we address the additional usability guidelines applied to the web pages describing the Primate Gallery of the Museum of Natural History and Territory (University of Pisa). Such guidelines permit: 1) to shape the page allowing to index the content and improving a clear hierarchical structure of the page, 2) to expand image descriptions (with a command providing alternative descriptions for specimens), 3) to include extra information (e.g. hidden labels) and useful sections (e.g. search functions, site map, etc.), and 4) to exploit multimedia elements (providing “acoustic information”, e.g. animal vocalizations).

Our guidelines should be considered when designing sites *ad-hoc* for museums, to guarantee a sufficient level of usability to vision impaired users.